

*Alexander Hamilton,  
Young Statesman*

The Young Patriots Series, Volume 14

**Teacher's Guide  
And Webquest**

**Note to Educators: This Teacher's Guide and Web quest are  
available for free download at { HYPERLINK  
"http://www.patriapress.com" }.**

**Patria Press, Inc.**  
*Alexander Hamilton, Young Statesman*  
**Teacher's Guide**

**Introduction**

This Teacher's Guide provides a framework for using *Alexander Hamilton, Young Statesman* in the classroom as a vehicle to engage students and weave literature into multiple content areas.

The Guide offers many suggestions for interdisciplinary activities that students can do before, during, and after they read the book. These learner-centered activities help students move from solely a comprehension, or knowledge-based way of thinking about historical fiction, to higher levels of critical thought that include analysis and evaluation.

**Before Reading**

1. Before starting any unit of study, it's a good idea to assess what students already know, or think they know, about the subject. If students have at least some knowledge of Hamilton or his accomplishments, draw a three-column chart on the blackboard with the headings: *What We Know About Alexander Hamilton*, *What We Want to Know*, and *What We Learned*.

Ask students to respond only to the first two columns. After reading the book and doing some or all of the After Reading activities, revisit the chart with the class to complete the third column (*What We Learned*) and to correct any erroneous information in the first column.

2. If students have no knowledge of Hamilton and his accomplishments, you can have them begin reading the book without any prior discussion, or you can review the historical timeframe that the book covers (approximately 1765-1773), including the early slave trade in the West Indies, colonial period, and Stamp Act. You might want to create a timeline of these important events in American history or have students create their own as they read through the book. Include events from "What Happened Next" at the end of the book, which summarizes major events in Hamilton's adult life until his death in 1804.

**During Reading**

While many teachers prefer that students read a book without interruption, others opt to conduct mini-assessments along the way.

1. Have students keep an ongoing literature journal in which they can write about what they're reading and keep an ongoing vocabulary list of unfamiliar words or phrases. You might also wish to provide writing prompts to help students think about what they're reading and to make connections to their own lives. Example writing prompts:

- What are some of Alec’s qualities, or personality traits that you think helped to shape who he became as an adult? What personality traits did he have that you didn’t like? Why? What are some of *your* best qualities, or traits of which you are most proud?
  - As you read the book, what kinds of conclusions can you make about whether or not the story of Alec’s life is true? Do you think some events were made up just to tell an entertaining story? What specific examples in the book can you find to support your ideas?
  - Alec’s temper is mentioned several times in the book. What do you think was the author’s purpose for including that information? (Note to teachers: Many historians emphasize Hamilton’s vitriolic temper that often steered his actions and caused him quite a bit of trouble throughout his adult life.)
  - In what ways is your everyday life today different from Alec’s everyday life growing up in the West Indies?
2. As students read the book, be sure to keep a world map posted so that they can identify each country and continent mentioned.
  3. As they read, have students identify figures of speech (e.g., metaphors and similes), phrases of alliteration, analogies, and language of the time period (e.g., *ride the cane*).

### **After Reading**

Historical fiction provides wonderful opportunities to weave and blend literature into many different content areas in meaningful ways. Following are a handful of ways for you to integrate a study of Alexander Hamilton in your classroom. Although they are organized by content areas, we encourage you to move across content lines to blend them in natural ways and to encourage your students to conduct further research on any specific topics of interest.

### **Language Arts Connections**

1. Discuss ways in which the author sets the time period and includes historical events and people in the text. Have students try their own hands at writing short historical fiction.
2. In Chapter 1, Alec finds a crate washed up on the shore. A very vocal parrot is inside. Have students write imaginative stories about finding a crate on the shore. Their stories should include details of how they found it and what was inside.

3. Latin and Greek were required subjects for children, like Alec, living in the 18<sup>th</sup> century—from childhood all the way through college. Have students learn common Latin and Greek root words. Find examples in the story and create a class chart showing the root word, its meaning, and examples of modern English words. Example: the Latin root word *dia* means *across*, and *metron* means *a measure*, as in the word *diameter* (Chapter X).
4. Students can write acrostic poems using the first names of any of the story’s characters (e.g., Alec, Hurry-Up, Neddy). Write the name vertically down the left side of the page. Capitalize each letter. All letters become the first letter of the word beginning each line. The words used in each line can be single words, phrases, or even ideas that are continued on the next line. The poem should describe the character’s traits or behaviors. Example of an acrostic poem for a girl named Meg:  
*Musical*  
*Earnest*  
*Generous*
5. In “What Happened Next,” it is noted that Hamilton wrote essays that appeared in *The Federalist* (also known as the *Federalist Papers*). These papers were a series of articles written by Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay Madison to gain popular support for the then-proposed Constitution. Older students can read, discuss, and summarize Hamilton’s essays, housed at the Library of Congress.
6. In 1801, Hamilton founded his own newspaper: *The New York Evening Post*. It remains one of the oldest, still-published American newspapers. Students can find today’s version of *The New York Post* online.
7. The story leaves the reader with some unanswered questions about Hamilton’s life. Have students work together to brainstorm remaining questions and then have them conduct research (in texts and on the Internet) to find answers.

### **Social Studies Connections**

1. Have students work individually or in pairs to complete the **WebQuest**. They will follow Web site links to gather information about the Constitutional Convention and then take on the role of a journalist at the scene. They will write an article about the event and include an “interview” with New York delegate Hamilton. When done, have students share their articles with the class.
2. On the first page of the story, we learn that Alec grew up on the island of St. Croix, in the West Indies, which was the one-time Danish West Indies capitol. Denmark eventually sold the Virgin Islands to the United States in 1917 for \$25 million. St.

Croix is now a U.S. Territory, along with the other U.S. Virgin Islands. All Virgin Islands residents are U.S. citizens. Have students locate these places on a map and learn more about the history of the Virgin Islands. Challenge students to learn what it means to be a “territory” of the United States.

3. The true issues of slavery are not discussed in detail in the book. Readers infer that life for slaves on Uncle Peter’s plantation was nothing too awful and that Poleon was Alec’s friend, instead of a slave owned by the family. It is important to help students understand that although Poleon’s experience might have been somewhat different from most slaves—because he spent time with Alec who was his same age—he was, in fact, a slave whose job is was to serve his “master” Alec. When Alec is instructed by his uncle to *ride the cane*, he is being taught to ride through the sugar cane fields to supervise the slaves working tirelessly, often in inhumane conditions. Plantation masters were not known for their kindness to any slave.

Older students can conduct their own research to learn more about the African slave trade. A good place to start is the *African-American Odyssey* collection of primary sources at the Library of Congress, National Digital Library site.

There they can also listen to amazing audio recordings of former slaves recounting their lives in their own words. Another excellent site, *Africans in America*, has resources for both students and teachers:

4. Students may wish to conduct further research to learn about the *Fireburn of 1878*, when former slaves rioted on St. Croix. What caused this to happen? During that time, Frederiksted and many plantations on the island were burned. Have students conduct research to learn what happened to the plantation where Alec grew up.
5. In “What Happened Next,” students learn that Hamilton helped organize the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Delegates to the Convention decided to write a Constitution. It took about four months to do so. The National Archives has a comprehensive look at the Convention and all who attended. Select the Alexander Hamilton link under the New York Delegate list to read his biography.
6. In Chapter III, students learn that Christiansted is a neighboring town to St. Croix. Christiansted was an important trade port in the 1700s. It is now a national historic site of the U.S. National Park Service. They preserved five historic structures from the 1700s when the area was under Danish sovereignty.
7. The story makes references to several major events in American history (i.e., Stamp Act, Treaty of Paris, Continental Congress, etc.). Divide students into teams to conduct research and write about these important events and people. Compile all writing into a class American History Guide, complete with a timeline.

8. Help students to understand the dependence on and relationship between England and the colonists. Discuss the conflicts between the colonists and the British in the years leading up to the Declaration of Independence. Encourage students to think about such things as the concept of “taxation without representation” and Britain’s trade restrictions. Ask students why they think the colonists didn’t trust the British, and vice-versa. Students may want to hold a class debate, with one side representing the views of the British and the other side, the views of the colonists.
9. As a child growing up in the West Indies, Alec is determined to get to the American colonies. Divide students into teams to research and compare the Middle Atlantic colonies, Southern colonies, and Northern colonies. (They might wish to create tables or Venn diagrams to compare similarities and differences among these three regions). Be sure students understand that the seaport towns of the Northern colonies, like Boston, were the hubs of fish and fur trading and shipbuilding, while the economies of Southern colonies (e.g., Georgia, South Carolina) were centered around growing such crops as cotton, rice, and tobacco on huge plantations. Students can create a chart or map showing when each of the thirteen original colonies was founded and by whom. They can add illustrations to depict each colony’s main trade or crop.
10. Hamilton founded the Federalist Party—the first political party in the nation. Have students learn what the Federalist Party represented
11. Dramatize any of the historic events mentioned in the book.

### **Science Connections**

1. In Chapter XIII, a hurricane comes to St. Croix in August, 1773. The story notes that animals and birds begin behaving differently as they sense the approaching storm. Have students learn more about how animals can sense forthcoming weather and even seismic activity. Here is a good place to begin research about animals’ sharp senses. Older students might wish to research the catastrophic 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in which reports described elephants that suddenly became agitated and instinctively ran toward the hills before the tsunami hit.
2. In Chapter XIV, Mr. Knox encourages Alex to write down the details of the hurricane. Those details were actually part of a letter that Alex sent to his father. Students can read an excerpt of that letter at the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration.

After reading the letter, have students learn more about the climate and seasons in the Virgin Islands and how it affects the lives of people living there. Have them consider the following:

- What kinds of weather phenomena (i.e., hurricanes, tropical storms) does the region endure and why?
  - What does the temperature of ocean water, trade winds, and ocean currents have to do with climate in this region?
  - How are customs, tourism, recreation, and work schedules affected by the climate in the Virgin Islands?
3. Earth can be divided into biomes, or environments that share similar climates, vegetation, and animal life. The Virgin Islands are considered tropical and subtropical biomes. Have students investigate the biodiversity of the region. Divide students into groups to conduct research and then create posters, dioramas, or information booklets to present the information to the class.
  4. In Chapter 1, readers learn about some animals living in the forests and costal regions of St. Croix in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, including land crabs, monkeys, snakes, and parakeets. Have students learn the status of these species now. Do they all still live on the islands? Are any threatened, endangered, or extinct?
  5. In Chapter VII, readers learn how sugar is made from cane. Bring into class a sugar cane stalk (available at many markets) and discuss the process by which the cane is turned into granulated sugar. Then help students to "grow" edible sugar rock candy. **NOTE: Adult supervision is necessary** to carefully pour the boiled sugar and water solution into jars.

#### Rock Candy

- a) Bring 1 cup of water to a boil.
- b) Add 2 cups of granulated sugar—slowly—about 1/4 cup at a time, stirring until each addition of sugar dissolves. Each addition of sugar will take longer to dissolve than the previous one.
- c) An adult should carefully pour the hot sugar solution into clean glass jars.
- d) Tie a piece of string to the middle of a pencil and a paper clip on the end of the string, to act as a weight.
- e) Lay the pencil across the top of the jar so the string with the paper clip falls into the sugar solution. The rock candy crystals will “grow” onto the string.
- f) Watch and wait—about a week—until the rock candy is ready to taste and observe. (NOTE: Students should not move the jars or pencils until the experiment is completely over or they will disturb the crystal growth process. Have students learn what made the crystals grow and why these crystals are known as *monoclinic* crystals.

#### **Mathematics Connections**

1. Readers learn that Alec is “good at figures” during the story. And, of course, his image is on the \$10 bill. But his involvement with money went a whole lot further! In 1789, President George Washington appointed Hamilton as the first Secretary of the Treasury. He remained in that office until 1795. Learn who the Secretary is today and what the Treasury’s duties and functions are. Older students can take a look at the Taxes link on the Treasury site and compare to taxes in Hamilton’s era. What’s the same and different about how we’re taxed now and then?
2. Hamilton also helped found the U.S. Mint and the First National Bank. Learn about the recent redesigns of the \$5 and \$100 bill:
3. By about 1775, the British colonists were extremely unhappy with the laws being handed down by the British government, an ocean away from them. The British Parliament, in London, demanded that the colonists pay many taxes to them. (Colonists called this “taxation without representation” because colonists had to pay the Parliament, but couldn’t be elected into the Parliament). Have students investigate The Stamp Act (mentioned in Chapter VI) which forced colonists to pay a tax on almost everything they bought. What kinds of things were taxed and how much were those taxes? How do those historic taxes compare with the taxes we pay today? Why are we taxed? Where does the money go? Compare your city’s taxes with other cities and states. Who is taxed the least/most and why? What would happen if there was no tax in the United States? Would it be a good or bad thing? Why?
4. Investigate the cost of 18<sup>th</sup> century foods, tools, books, newspapers, linens, and other household items.
5. Develop math skills through cooking by having students make popular recipes of the time period. Students can make a traditional Poor Man’s Pudding, popular in the 1800s, and then search texts and the Internet for even more traditional recipes. This recipe is the modernized version (found on Cooks.com) ... no log fire necessary! Students will need to multiply this recipe to make sure the entire class has some to eat.

Poor Man’s Pudding (Serves 4)

1/4 cup rice

3 T sugar \_\_\_\_\_

pinch of salt

1 T butter

1 quart milk

Put rice in a baking dish with salt, sugar, and butter. Pour the milk over it and bake at 325 degrees for at about 2.5 hours, stirring twice during the first hour.

6. Challenge students to determine the distance and probable length of time it took for

Alec to travel from St Croix to New York. How long might a trip like that have taken in the 1700s? Days? Weeks? Months? How long would it take today?

### **Arts Connections**

1. Create a mural on a large sheet of butcher paper to illustrate each chapter of the book. There are many detailed descriptions of scenes that students can envision and put on paper. Divide students into pairs or groups of three to create different segments of the class mural.
2. Create 3D shoebox dioramas depicting one scene from the book. If desired, students might wish to divide the book into the main events and create one diorama for each event.
3. Pressed flowers was a popular craft in the 1700s (and still is today)! Have students make pressed flower note cards by picking flowers or greenery and removing all stems. Spread the blossoms and leaves on a sheet of white paper. Put a second piece of paper on top and then lay a few heavy books on top to sandwich the layers. Let it sit undisturbed for about 2 weeks. When completely dried, remove petals and greenery, spread small amounts of glue on the back of each and gently press onto blank note cards.
4. Learn about and then make such traditional colonial crafts as patchwork quilts, apple dolls, cornhusk dolls, pomander balls, knitted items, and embroidery samplers. Then barter the crafts at school; bartering for goods and services was common in the colonies.
5. The colonists often had to use just what nature provided them for their clothing, bedding, etc. Ask students to create one useful item made solely from what nature provides.

### **Assessment**

All of the student activities can be assessed in traditional ways (i.e., with quizzes and letter grading systems) to determine how well students can memorize and can recount facts. However, since these activities are rooted in discovery, discussion, communication, and collaboration, they lend themselves to more holistic types of assessment that measure achievement of academic skills, behaviors, and even social/emotional growth. We encourage you to use one or more of the following alternative assessments as students complete the activities.

- **Portfolios**—Keep one portfolio of work for each student to measure progress over a specific period of time. Portfolios are a great aid for both student/teacher and parent/teacher conferences. Encourage students to participate in selecting samples of writing, artwork, research notes, etc. to be included in their portfolios.

- **Rubrics**— Create a rubric, or chart (with or without grades or a numerical grading scale) to assess whether or not students have met specific standards and learning goals that you have previously identified.
- **Self-Assessment**—Hold regular teacher/student interviews to listen to students evaluate their own progress and skills.

## **WebQuest**

### ***Extra, Extra! Read All About It!***

#### **Introduction**

Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter, on the scene at the Constitutional Convention. You will learn about Alexander Hamilton and other delegates to the Convention. Then you will interview Hamilton and write an article about your experiences at the Convention.

#### **Process**

##### **Step 1**

Visit these websites to get background information for your article.

##### **Web Sites:**

- Congress for Kids: Delegates to the Constitutional Convention
- The Constitutional Convention

##### **Step 2**

Use the information you gathered in Step 1 to write your article. Pretend that you've asked Hamilton questions about his role in the Convention. Include your questions and his answers in your article. Describe what you see, hear, and feel at the Convention.

Remember that a news story gives readers the facts by answering such questions as *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how*. Be sure to answer these questions in your article. For example, you can write about such things as:

- Who the delegates were
- What the convention was like and what was discussed
- When and where it took place
- How the delegates hope people react to their hard work

### **Step 3**

When your article is complete, check it for spelling and punctuation errors. Make all the necessary corrections.

### **Step 4**

Add a headline, or title to your article. The headline should summarize, in just a few words, the main idea of the article, and it should grab the reader's attention. Example headlines: *Fifty-Five Delegates Attend Convention* or *Coming Soon: A Constitution!*

### **Step 5**

Read your article aloud to the class.